

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2038

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1146

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, KS, US
SUBJECT: US-KOREAN POLICY: OVERALL US-ROK RELATIONSHIP

1. PREVIOUS MESSAGES DEAL WITH THE CRITICAL POLICY DECISIONS IN US-KOREAN RELATIONS AS ESSENTIALLY SEPARATE ISSUES. HOWEVER, AS THE DISCUSSION OF THESE ISSUES INDICATES, THEY ARE IN FACT CLOSELY RELATED. CONCEPTUALLY, THEREFORE, A REVIEW OF US-KOREAN RELATIONS MUST BEGIN WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP AND AMERICAN GOALS FOR THE LONGER TERM IN KOREA. NO DECISION ON THE SPECIFIC ISSUES IS ADVISABLE UNTIL THIS BROADER FRAMEWORK IS DEVELOPED.

2. WHILE DECISIONS ARE YET TO BE MADE ON VARIOUS SPECIFIC ISSUES, FOR PURPOSES OF THIS DISCUSSION WE ASSUME DECISIONS REQUIRING AT LEAST PARTIAL REDUCTION OF GROUND FORCES, GREATER EMPHASIS BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, AND CONSTRAINTS ON TRANSFERS OF ADVANCED WEAPONS AND TECHNOLOGY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT PARK HAS FORTUNATELY PREEMPTED US APPROACHES BY CANCELLING HIS ADVANCED WEAPONS PROGRAM, INCLUDING NUCLEAR TIPPED MISSILES, CONSTANT

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MONITORING OF ROK EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD WILL ALSO BE REQUIRED. FINALLY, THERE IS ALSO THE POSSIBILITY OF CONGRESSIONAL CUTS IN FOREIGN MILITARY GUARANTEED CREDITS FOR KOREA.

3. TAKEN TOGETHER, THESE ACTIONS COULD ADD UP TO BAD NEWS FOR ROKG AND OPEN POSSIBILITY OF KOREAN MISINTERPRETATION

OF AMERICAN MOTIVES AS POLICY OF GRADUAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM KOREA. PRESIDENT PARK AND OTHER KOREANS ARE ALREADY OVER-SENSITIVE TO AND OVER-INTERPRET VIRTUALLY EVERY LESSENING OF US SUPPORT AS A MOVE TO DISENGAGEMENT. HISTORICALLY, PARK AND OTHER KOREANS HAVE SOUGHT AND WELCOMED THE INTIMACY OF KOREA'S TIES WITH THE US, BUT HAVE RESISTED THE OBLIGATIONS IMPOSED AND HAVE CHARTED A CONTINGENCY POLICY OF SELF-RELIANCE AS A FALLBACK. THIS TENDENCY TO ANTICIPATE DISENGAGEMENT AND PRESS FORWARD WITH SELF-RELIANCE COULD BE REINFORCED IN THE EVENT OF THE ABOVE SERIES OF ACTIONS.

4. TO AVOID THIS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS PITFALL, A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC MEASURES ARE SUGGESTED, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO TROOP REDUCTIONS. THESE INCLUDE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO MAKE UP FOR DEFICIENCIES RESULTING FROM WITHDRAWAL OF 2ND DIVISION FIREPOWER AND HELICOPTERS, ACTIONS TO REAFFIRM THE U.S. TREATY COMMITMENT, APPROACHES TO THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PRC AND CONTINUATION OF RESISTANCE TO US-ROK BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, AS WELL AS FULL AND FRANK CONSULTATION WITH ROKG ON ALL ISSUES. HOWEVER, OUR CONFIDENCE BUILDING COUNTER-MEASURES ARE LIKELY TO FALL SHORT OF KOREAN DESIRES, AND DOUBTS ABOUT AMERICA'S STAYING POWER WILL REMAIN. THIS IS INEVITABLE AS LONG AS THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE DIVIDES US. I WOULD URGE THAT WE MAKE EXPLICITLY CLEAR TO PRESIDENT PARK AND THE KOREANS THAT THE GAP BETWEEN US ON HUMAN RIGHTS WILL INEVITABLY NECESSITATE A MORE LIMITED RELATIONSHIP TO KOREA THAN WE WOULD CHOOSE.

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5. IN FACT, WE WOULD PROPOSE GOING BEYOND THIS POINT TO UNDERScore THE DIFFERENCE FOR PARK AND THE KOREANS BETWEEN A LIMITED PARTNERSHIP BASED ON NARROW SECURITY AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS, AND A FULL AND MORE DURABLE PARTNERSHIP BASED UPON ACCEPTANCE OF SHARED VALUES

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COMBINED WITH REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ON OUR PART ON THE PROGRESS TOWARD GREATER DEMOCRACY FEASIBLE IN KOREA. A FULL PARTNERSHIP COULD EMBRACE SUCH FEATURES ATTRACTIVE TO ROK AS BROADER CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY AS WE HAVE WITH JAPAN, INCREASED CERTAINTY REGARDING THE LONG-TERM DURABILITY OF AMERICA'S ROLE AND RELATIONSHIP TO KOREA, SPONSORSHIP OF OECD MEMBERSHIP IN THE EARLY 1980'S, A BIAS TOWARDS KOREA ON A VARIETY OF ECONOMIC AND OTHER ISSUES AS CHARACTERIZES OUR OTHER ALLIED RELATIONSHIPS, AND BROADER TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFERS. BY SPELLING OUT BOTH THE DIFFERENCES AND LIMITATIONS IMPOSED ON A MINIMAL RELATIONSHIP AND THE ADDED ADVANTAGES OF A FULL PARTNERSHIP, WE CAN STRENGTHEN THE CREDIBILITY OF THE AMERICAN SECURITY COMMITMENT TO KOREA EVEN IN A LIMITED PARTNERSHIP BY DECOUPLING OUR COMMITMENT FROM HUMAN RIGHTS, WHILE PROVIDING A POSITIVE INCENTIVE FOR PARK TO BEGIN A MEANINGFUL PROCESS TOWARDS GREATER RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE RIGHT OF DISSENT AND INCREASED DEMOCRACY IN KOREA.

6. THE CHOICE WILL BE LEFT IN KOREAN HANDS. THERE ARE TACTICAL ADVANTAGES IN THIS APPROACH OF SHIFTING THE ONUS OF DECISION FROM THE US TO KOREA, PARTICULARLY IN PUTTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN POSITIVE RATHER THAN SECRET

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PUNITIVE TERMS AND NOT LINKING IT TO OUR SECURITY COMMITMENT. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, A FULL PARTNERSHIP UNDER THE TERMS OUTLINED COULD WORK TO OUR LONGER-TERM ADVANTAGE. ASSUMING OUR SECURITY INTERESTS ARE IMMUTABLE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BARRING A FUNDAMENTAL ADJUSTMENT IN THE ASIAN BALANCE OF POWER, A LIMITED RELATIONSHIP WITH KOREA IS INESCAPABLE. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, A FULLER PARTNERSHIP WITH FEWER CONSTRAINTS ON BOTH PARTNERS, BASED ON SHARED VALUES HAS DISTINCT ADVANTAGES TO US. IT WOULD PERMIT EXPLOITATION TO U.S. ADVANTAGE OF KOREA'S MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSETS WHICH MAKE IT THE SECOND MOST POWERFUL NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRY IN ASIA, MUCH FACILITATE OUR RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AND

ALLOW US TO DECREASE THE BURDEN ON US OF KOREA SINCE REDUCTION OF FORCES UNDER SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT IS LIKELY TO CREATE FAR LESS ANXIETY IN KOREA, JAPAN AND ELSEWHERE IN ASIA. MOREOVER, A FULL PARTNERSHIP WILL FACE NORTH KOREA AND ITS ALLIES WITH MORE CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO ACCEPTING A TWO-KOREA ACCOMMODATION FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. FOR THESE REASONS, WE SUGGEST EXPLORING THIS TWO-STAGE APPROACH, EVEN THOUGH WE RECOGNIZE IT COULD BE VIEWED AS DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENT TO A "DUBIOUS" ALLY.

7. GIVEN PARK'S ADAMANT STANCE ON PRESERVING YUSHIN AUTHORITARIANISM AND HIS OWN POSITION, WE ARE NOT SANGUINE REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR HIS ACCEPTING A FULL PARTNERSHIP UNDER THESE TERMS. BUT, BY PLACING THE MONKEY ON HIS BACK IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO CLAIM WE ARE INTERFERING IN HIS INTERNAL AFFAIRS. PARK SHOULD ALSO BE FORCED TO JUSTIFY HIS REJECTION OF A FULL PARTNERSHIP; WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR TO HIM THAT, AFTER SUFFICIENT TIME FOR HIS CONSIDERATION, WE INTEND TO MAKE KNOWN OUR PROPOSAL, AT LEAST TO KEY CONTACTS. EVEN IF PARK REJECTS OUR PROPOSAL, WE CONSIDER IT WORTH THE EFFORT SINCE IT WILL MAKE CLEAR TO PARK, HIS COLLEAGUES AND

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HIS SUCCESSORS THAT IT IS KOREA WHICH MUST MAKE THE CHOICE ON ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S.

8. WITH THIS SCENARIO, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT PARK WILL ACCEPT OUR SUGGESTION HOPING TO GAIN ITS ADVANTAGES WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL ADJUSTMENTS IN HIS POWER STRUCTURE. WE COULD FORESTALL THIS TACTIC BY SPELLING OUT IN MORE SPECIFIC TERMS OUR CRITERIA FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS, SPECIFICALLY NO WINDOW DRESSING, AND BY MOVING TOWARD FULL PARTNERSHIP ON A PROGRESSIVE BASIS HINGED TO PARK'S TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FOR OURSELVES, REALISTIC CRITERIA FOR PROGRESS TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS FULFILLMENT AND GREATER DEMOCRACY WILL BE REQUIRED. THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING A TWO-STAGE--LIMITED, FULL PARTNERSHIP--APPROACH TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD INDEED BE COMPLEX. BUT, THE REWARDS--BOTH SHORT AND LONG-TERM--MIGHT WELL JUSTIFY THE EFFORT.

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